

Community Forum Series 2 Results - Working Paper

Revised 2/12/13

Overview

The public engagement activities of Community Forum Series 2 included six public meetings held throughout the parish over four days during November 14-17, 2012, seven Meetings in a Box with various groups and organizations, and an online survey which was open for approximately three weeks. Approximately 700 people participated in total, an estimated 175 attended forums, 401 responded to the online survey, and about 125 joined a meeting in the box exercise.

The purpose of the second community forum series was to share the Trend Growth Scenario – *the direction Lafayette is headed without any intervention* – with the community and to collectively imagine alternatives to the trend, which are more consistent with the comprehensive plan vision statement.

The Trend Growth Scenario depicts where growth and development is most likely to occur over the next 20 years. The anticipated growth pattern is based on a number of factors including areas most susceptible to change and projected residential and non-residential development. Over the last 20-year period, Lafayette Parish grew by about 56,000 people. As part of the comprehensive planning process, WRT team member Lambert Advisory developed population projections illustrating that the parish is expected to grow at an even faster pace, and projected a high estimate of about 90,000 new residents over the next 20-year period (approximately 30,000 dwelling units are projected for the city of Lafayette and unincorporated areas). Another 11,500 dwelling units are projected for the other incorporated areas of the parish that are factored into the projection, but not part of the comprehensive planning process. Using this projection, the Trend Growth Scenario shows where residential and non-residential development is likely to occur in the city of Lafayette and unincorporated areas of the parish (i.e. not including the parish's other municipalities), without any policy or regulatory intervention.

During the meetings of Community Forum Series #2 and related Meetings in a Box, approximately 300 participants working in small groups were asked to review the Trend Growth Scenario, compare it to the comprehensive plan vision statement, and illustrate on a map where and how they would prefer to see Lafayette grow over the next 20 years. Each group was provided with a base map, a booklet describing recent trends and conditions, and a set of “chip” stickers to represent new residential, non-residential, mixed-use, and transportation improvements. The groups then worked as a team to place the stickers on the map to represent their preferred development patterns – as well as to document their top priorities for future development.

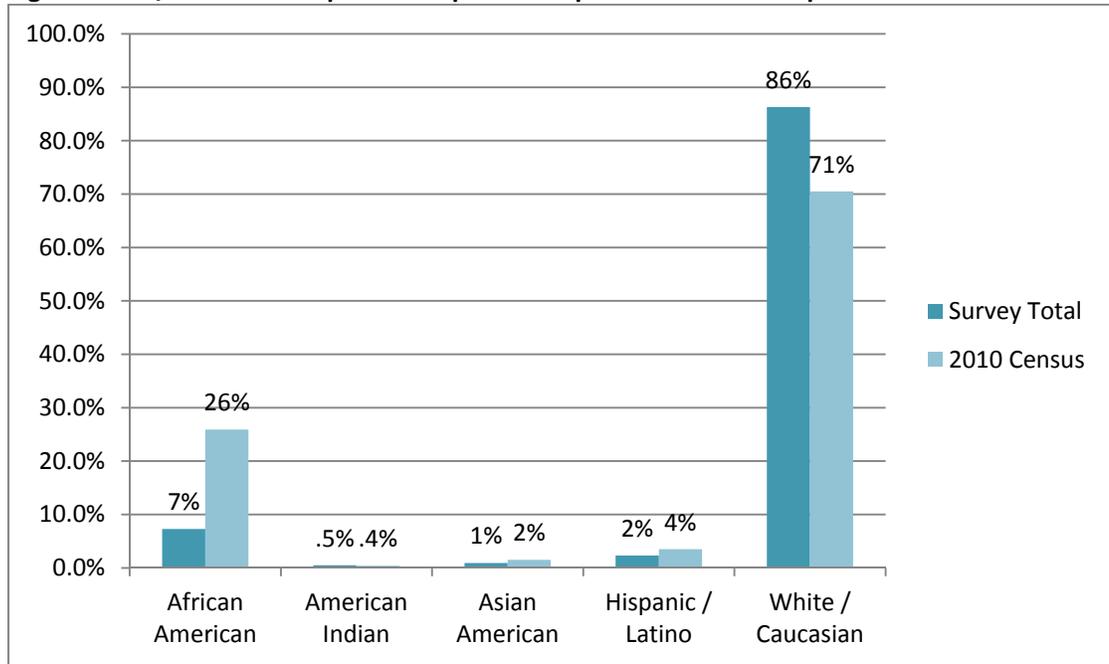
Following the mapping exercise, participants answered a series of polling questions about their preferences for different types of development patterns, access to transportation and transit, types of parks, and preservation of open space. The responses are factored into the different scenario types (e.g. about 90% of forum participants said that it was somewhat or very important for them to be living within walking distance of shops, restaurants, and schools). The results of the polling data and a follow up Alternative Futures online survey will be further used to describe different land use types (e.g. single-family residential, multi-family residential), location of employment centers, and the open space network.

Survey Demographics

As described in the introduction, Forum 2 included a polling session at each of the public forums and a follow up online survey. A summary of the demographic results of the combined surveys follows:

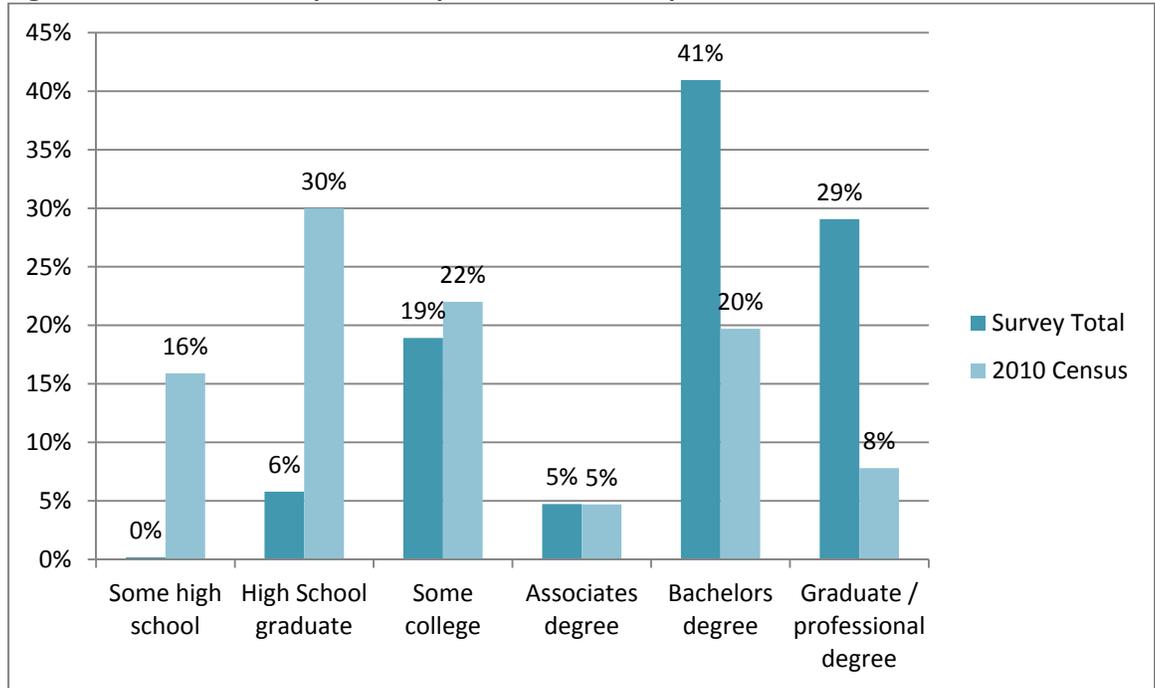
- Community Forum Series 2 attracted new participation in the planning process. Interestingly, 66% of respondents had not participated in the first series of forums held in April.
- About 69% of respondents live in the city of Lafayette, 12% live in unincorporated Lafayette, and 20% live in other incorporated areas or outside of Lafayette Parish.
- The majority of respondents (86%) identified their race / ethnicity as White or Caucasian, 7% as African American, and 2% as Hispanic or Latino. In comparison, according to the 2010 Census, the parish has a higher percentage of African American and a smaller percentage of White residents (see Fig 1).

Fig 1 – Racial/Ethnic Makeup of Participants Compared to General Population



- Respondents fell into a range of age groups, with about 49% in the 45-64 age range, 18% age 25-34, 16% age 35-44, and 14% age 65-74. Very few respondents were younger than 24 (1%) or older than 75 (3%).
- The majority of respondents are longtime residents of Lafayette Parish. About 46% have lived in Lafayette 30 years or more and another 34% reported living in Lafayette for 10 to 30 years. About 11% have lived in the area for 5-10 years and 9% are more recent residents – moving to the area in the last five years.
- Respondents had a mix of educational backgrounds, but tended to be more educated than the general population (see Fig 2). About 40% have a Bachelor’s degree or some graduate level courses and another 29% of respondents have a Graduate or other professional degree in addition to a Bachelor’s.

Fig 2 – Education of Participants Compared to General Population



- When asked to describe where they live, the vast majority (89%) of respondents answered single-family home. The remaining 11% are split between townhouse (2.6%), 2-4 unit building (2.5%), multi-family building (3%), mobile home (1%), or other (1%). In addition, the majority of respondents describe the area where they live as suburban neighborhood (39%) or older neighborhood close to downtown Lafayette (25%). Another 17% live downtown or near downtown, 15% live in a rural community, and 2% live on a farm.
- Of the respondents who worked outside the home, the majority (85%) of respondents indicated that they worked in the city of Lafayette, compared to 11% outside of Lafayette Parish, 3% in other parish municipalities, and 2% in unincorporated areas.
- Of the respondents who are employed, about 34% had one-way commute times under 10 minutes, 32% spend 10-20 minutes commuting, and 14% spend 20-30 minutes commuting. A small number (1%) spend more than an hour commuting and another 6% work from home. In addition, of those who commute for work, 94% of respondents drive alone, about 3% bicycle, 2% walk, and 1% or less carpool or take the bus.

Alternative Futures Survey Ideas

In addition to answering questions about themselves, where they live, and where they work, participants at the forums and follow up online survey were asked a series of questions about where they see themselves in the future and how Lafayette should develop over the next 20 years. A summary of the results of the combined surveys follows:

- When asked where they see themselves wanting to live in 10-15 years, just under half (48%) said they'd like to stay in the same house, while about 20% would like to be in a smaller house near

restaurants and shops, 13% in a mostly residential suburban neighborhood, 12% in a rural area, and 7% in an apartment or townhome in or near downtown.

- The survey results indicate that respondents would like to see future employment throughout the parish, rather than focused in one location. About 42% prefer employment throughout the parish, 38% would like to see jobs concentrated in satellite center or smaller nodes, and 20% would prefer employment be downtown or near downtown.
- When asked about being able to walk to stores, restaurants, and schools, about 71% of respondents said it was either very important or somewhat important to live in walking distance of those uses. The remaining 29% of respondents indicated that it wasn't important or they did not want to be close to stores, schools, etc.

Fig 3 – Walking Distance from Amenities (e.g., shops, restaurants, schools)



- Over half (57%) of respondents indicated that access to public transit is either very important (23%) or somewhat important (34%), while for 43% it's either not important or they do not want access.
- An overwhelming majority (97%) of respondents indicated that preserving the parish's natural features and open space is either very important (72%) or somewhat important (25%).
- When asked about what type of parks and open space they most enjoy, 48% said they like informal, natural settings with trails, 39% said they prefer semi-formal parks and fields with active uses, and 13% said they prefer formal civic / event space.

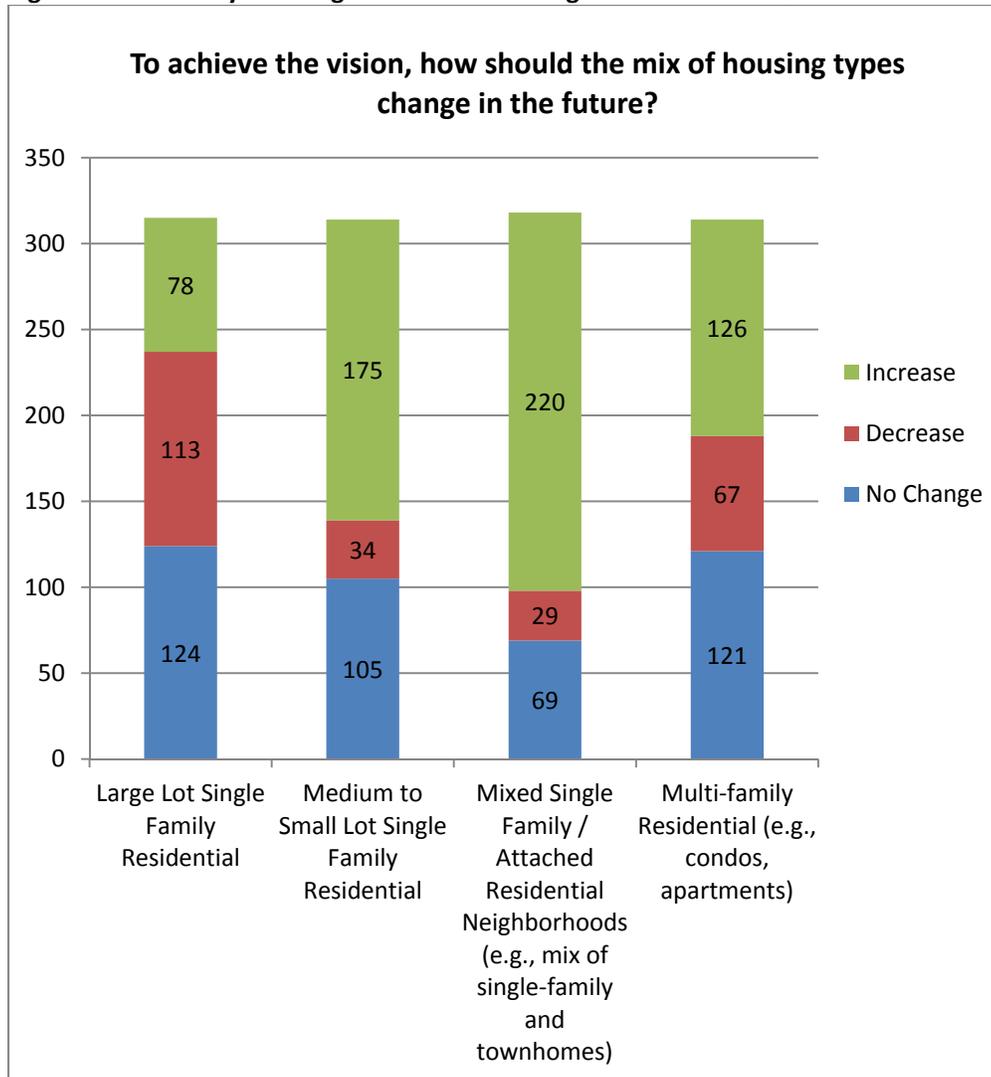
The online survey asked respondents several additional questions not included in the Community Forum 2 polling questions. This series included questions about how Lafayette could improve its transportation, residential development patterns, and preservation of natural resources to be more consistent with the future described in the plan's vision statement.

- The online survey asked participants to rank a series of transportation options for how they would improve mobility in the region (question 18) on a scale of 1-5 (one being the most

important and 5 being the least important. **In average order of importance, participants selected:**

- Maintain and improve existing roads through capacity improvements (average rating of 2.38)
 - Improve access by extending and connecting existing roads (average rating of 2.51)
 - Develop more bike lanes and bicycle amenities (e.g., share the road signage, bike parking) (average rating of 3.22)
 - Improve pedestrian connections (e.g., trails and sidewalks) (average rating of 3.3)
 - Increase public transit access (e.g., development near transit, improve transit routes, more frequent stops) (average rating of 3.59)
- Online survey respondents were asked to provide their specific ideas (open ended question) about how to improve mobility. More than 25% of online survey respondents (116 people) answered the question and provided ideas that focused on several major themes:
 - **Public Transit:** Provide more transit service, improve public awareness of what already exists – e.g., marketing campaign, “greener” alternative to driving, long-range thinking about new transit systems.
 - **Alleviate Congestion through Improving Existing Roads:** Increase use of roundabouts, use of timed lights, targeted roadway expansions, traffic calming in neighborhoods, reduce “cut-through” roads, and continue to look for best practices to reduce overall congestion.
 - **Create New Roads:** Develop a connected, loop roadway system around the city, expressway with limited access, new roundabout roads, implement existing plans.
 - **Sidewalk and Bicycle Improvements:** Safer, more protected bike lanes, connected trails and green infrastructure network, integration of coulee drainage system into bike/pedestrian network, options for walking and biking to work, shops, and nightlife.
 - **Land Use Patterns:** planned development and linked transportation, mixed-use commercial residential centers that reduce the need to drive, transportation “nodes” with park and ride type options.
 - The online survey asked participants to choose between the options to increase, decrease, or maintain, the balance of residential dwelling units types and neighborhoods to more closely achieve what is described in the vision statement (a community of safe neighborhoods that provided expanded housing and lifestyle choices among diverse, urban, suburban, and rural settings) (see Fig 4). **The majority of respondents chose to:**
 - **Medium to small lot single family residential:** Majority (175/314) 56% of respondents preferred an increase in this type of development.
 - **Mixed single family / attached residential neighborhoods:** Majority (220/318) 69% of respondents preferred an increase in this type of development.
 - **Multi-family residential:** Majority (126/314) 40% of respondents preferred an increase in multi-family residential development and (121/314) 39% preferred no change in the proportion of multi-family residential.
 - Large lot single-family residential: Majority (124/315) 39% of respondents preferred no change to the proportion of this type of development, while (113/124) 36% would decrease the proportion of large lot single-family residential uses.

Fig 4 – How would you change the mix of housing units in the future?



- Online survey respondents were asked to provide their specific ideas (open ended question) about how to change the future residential land use pattern to achieve the vision statement. The ideas focused on several different themes:
 - **Mixed-use development with residential above:** examples include River Ranch or Sugar Mill Pond (in an appropriate location), mixed-use along major corridors, multi-family above businesses, revise zoning to be more flexible, ground floor retail and other amenities, studios/office/loft type development, family-friendly development to attract young families and children and create vibrant areas.
 - **Multi-Family Housing:** Downtown apartments, middle-income rental housing, townhomes, multi-family housing near retail and other amenities.
 - **Senior Communities:** single story townhomes and condos, active senior communities where people have their own homes, access to services, walking trails, etc.
 - **Affordable / mixed-income housing:** transitional housing for formerly homeless, affordable rental housing, mixed affordable / market rate housing, smaller homes allowed on single-family lot (e.g. for children, grandparents).
 - **Owner-Occupied / Small Lot Residential:** Encourage owner-occupied duplexes, housing co-ops, smaller single-family homes.

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Comprehensive Plan

- **Other:** Improve transportation access and connectivity; appropriate locations for new development, e.g., community with mixed-housing types works well in River Ranch but small lot residential not appropriate in rural areas without infrastructure; let demand dictate land use mix
- Respondents were asked to select strategies to achieve the goal of effectively managing growth and development in the future (respondents were able to select more than one strategy):
 - 61% selected **strengthen/revitalize the urban core** (downtown Lafayette and adjacent neighborhoods)
 - 54% selected **direct growth to other centers** (e.g. smaller communities other than downtown, areas near city boundaries, arterial roads or intersections)
 - 52% selected **in rural areas, cluster residential growth** to preserve farmland and open space as much as possible
 - 7% selected **no change**, nothing wrong with current pattern
 - 9% of respondents provided **additional ideas** e.g., address through planning and zoning regulations, adopt impact fees or infrastructure related cost fees, start a conservation easement programs, focus on balancing where new growth is located, only approve new development that has infrastructure in place to support it, focus on infill in suburban neighborhoods, or limit regulations / let market decide

Synthesis of Alternative Future Maps and Survey Results

To create alternative future scenarios to the Trend Growth Scenario, WRT reviewed 36 maps created by Lafayette residents during the community forums and follow up Meetings-in-a-Box, priorities described by each of the groups, polling responses from the community forums, and the results of the Alternative Futures online survey described above.

From the review of all of these materials, a number of similarities and collective priority areas for future development/redevelopment began to emerge. Three types of patterns became apparent:

- 1) Those that concentrate future development downtown and in nodes across the parish,
- 2) Those that encourage more geographically balanced development and
- 3) Those that focus future development along key corridors and neighborhoods.

These three overarching themes served as the basis for creating basic development/redevelopment concepts. The concepts, described in the following section and the accompanying maps, factor in not only the physical locations shown on the alternative maps, but also the priorities identified by the public, the “susceptibility to change” analysis previously prepared by WRT, and environmental information such as floodplain and floodway data. Each alternative future accommodates the same number of dwelling units and new residents (about 30,000 new units and 66,000 new residents) and new jobs (about 26,000 retail, office, hospitality, and industrial new jobs).

Survey input indicates the desire for a change from the trend of scattered development patterns towards a more compact, walkable development pattern. For example, 71% of survey respondents (339 out of 480) indicated it is either ‘very important’ or ‘somewhat important’ to live within walking distance of amenities such as shops, grocery stores, schools and open spaces. Also, 97% of respondents (463 out of 480) indicated it is either ‘very important’ or ‘somewhat important’ to preserve the Parish’s natural features and existing open spaces.

Each map exercise includes a record of the group’s priority recommendations for future development patterns. These priorities reiterated survey findings. Common terms, phrases and ideas that emerged include:

- Increased residential development downtown
- More mixed use
- Balance development throughout the Parish
- Increase road connections
- Strengthen downtown
- New development centers
- Improve existing roadways
- Improve multi-modal offerings
- Better transit service
- Development riverfront property
- Utilize coulees
- Increase access to green space
- Build an outer highway loop

Alternative Scenario Concepts

Three scenario types were fleshed out to reflect the community's maps and the results of the surveys. The working titles of the three scenario concepts are:

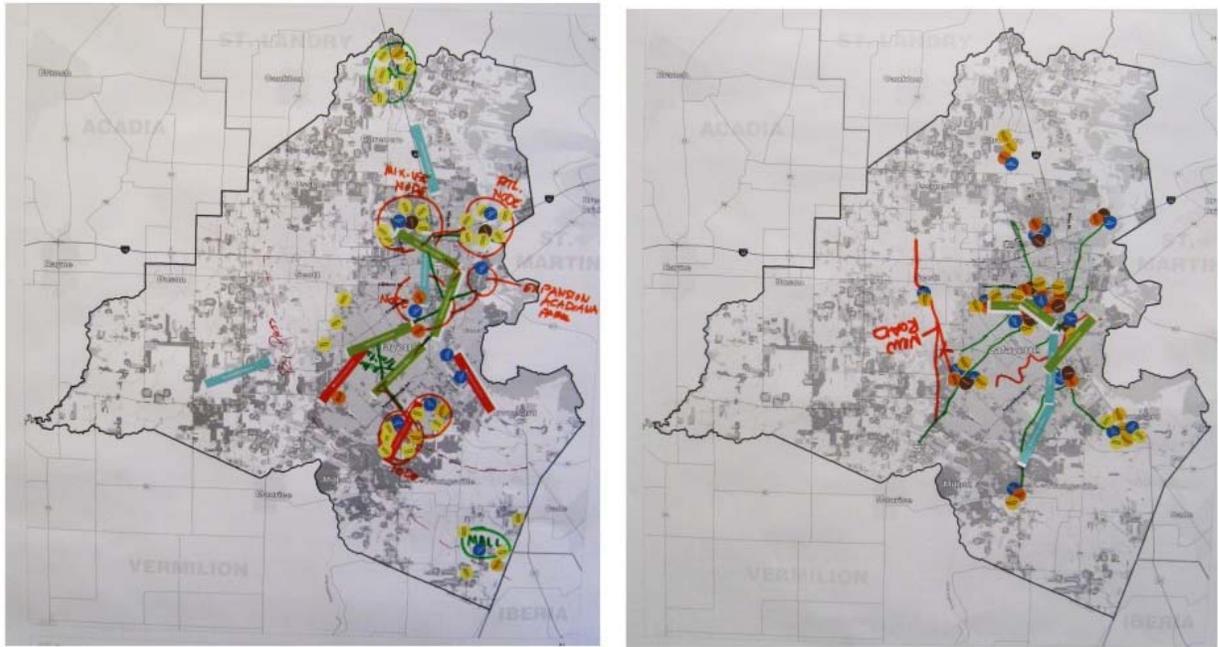
1. Nodal Development
2. Balanced Scenario
3. Corridor and Neighborhoods

Note that examples of community maps are included with each alternative concept; the full set of community scenario maps is included in Appendix B.

Scenario 1: Nodal Development

Survey and map results illustrate that participants are in favor of satellite mixed use centers or nodes in downtown Lafayette and in other areas throughout the parish. Nearly 40%, or 178 out of 470 survey respondents, indicated they wanted new job centers to be located in centralized nodes throughout the parish. In addition to jobs, these centers would include other office uses, retail, residential and open space. Map exercise results reiterated survey results. Notable examples of nodal concepts include:

Fig 5 – Nodal Development Map Examples



Areas of consensus:

After reviewing all of the community ideas, over a dozen development node locations were identified. From that list, a number of nodes emerged regularly, eventually forming clear areas of consensus. Specific areas of consensus for development in nodes include:

- Lafayette city core (e.g., downtown, Four Corners, Simcoe area, University/Cameron)
- Oil Center area
- Horse Farm Area (Node surrounding Johnston St and Bertrand Drive)
- University Avenue
- Acadiana Mall
- Surrounding River Ranch

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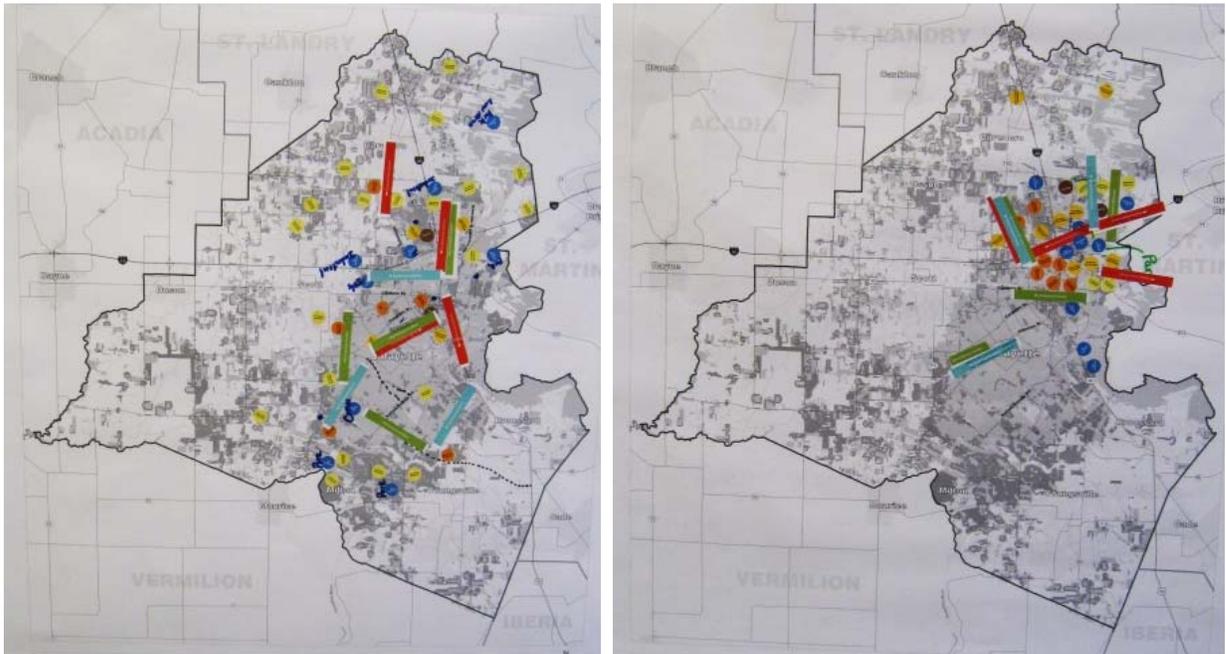
Comprehensive Plan

- Surrounding Milton
- Cameron Street/Ambassador Caffery Parkway interchange
- Areas near Carencro and adjacent to the city of Lafayette

Scenario 2: Balanced Scenario

The Trend Growth Scenario indicates a continued pattern of new development occurring mostly in the southern areas of the city of Lafayette and unincorporated parish. Numerous group maps indicate a shift from this pattern going forward. While a few groups indicated heavily concentrating new development/redevelopment in downtown Lafayette and north of I-10, others called for a more balanced, equitable approach. Notable examples of this concept include:

Fig 6 – Balanced Scenario Map Examples



Areas of consensus:

After reviewing all of the community ideas, it became apparent that about 30% of the maps favored a shift to increase development of varying types north of downtown and I-10. The proponents of this change see the planned I-49 connector improvements as facilitating this growth, relieving traffic congestion through the city of Lafayette and making it easier to travel between I-10, downtown, and southern areas of the parish, including the Lafayette Regional Airport. This scenario envisions a more balanced approach to development that encourages new retail, residential, and employment in underserved areas to the north, while still targeting growth and redevelopment in the central and southern areas of the parish.

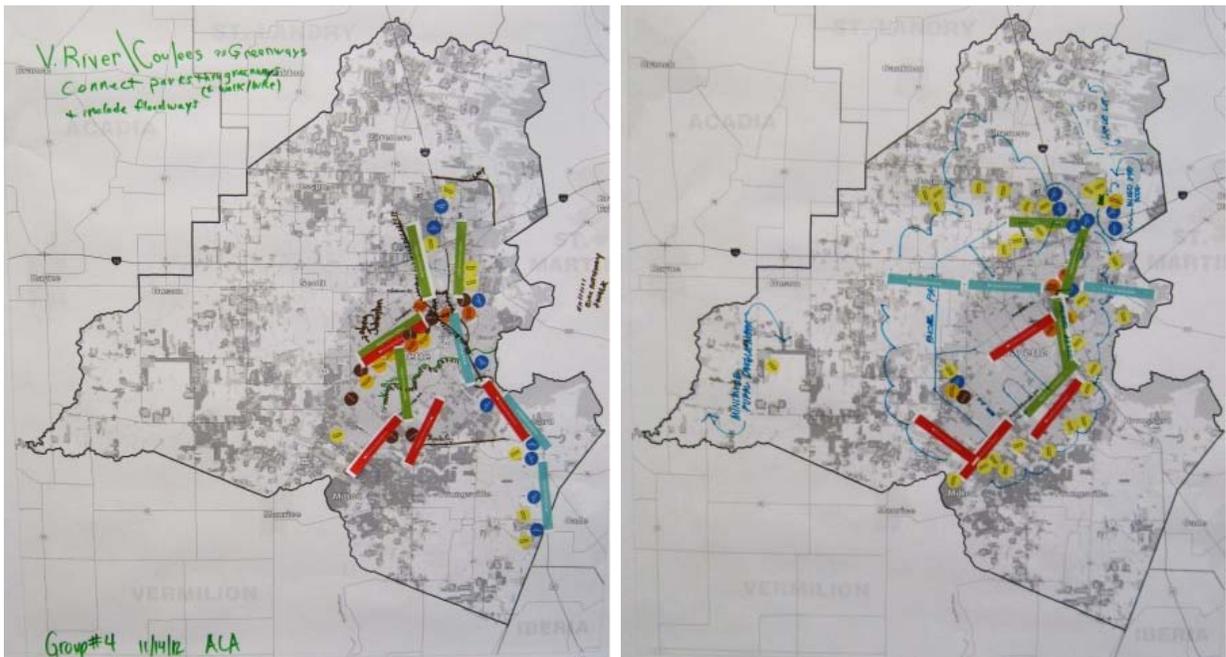
Specific areas of consensus include:

- Infill development in and around downtown Lafayette
- Improve University Avenue
- Mixed-use development at University Avenue and Pont Des Mouton Road
- Mixed-use development north of the city of Lafayette
- Single family development around the Louisiana Avenue extension
- Single family development around Gloria Switch Road west of I-49.

Scenario 3: Corridors and Neighborhoods

As noted previously, the majority of respondents agreed that access to amenities such as shops, offices, and schools is important to them. In conjunction, 57%, or 275 out of 483 survey respondents, indicated it is either ‘very important’ or ‘somewhat important’ to have access to public transportation. Retail and other commercial development, as well as transit infrastructure already exists along many of the Parish’s commercial corridors. Scenario 3 builds on the existing pattern, but focuses on integrating mixed-use development and higher density residential along these key corridors. Notable examples of this concept include:

Fig 7 – Corridors and Neighborhood Map Examples



Areas of consensus:

The corridors illustrated by this scenario are those most often highlighted through public output. Roughly 14 corridors were identified as places in need of improvement, infill development or improved amenities such as bike lanes or sidewalks. From that comprehensive list, a number of consensus areas emerged, including:

- Johnston Street
- Louisiana Avenue
- University Avenue
- Kaliste Saloom Road
- Congress Street
- Verot School Road
- Cameron Street
- Ambassador Caffery Parkway south of I-10
- Portions of West Pinhook Road
- I-49 improvement area

Other Ideas

About 22% of groups (8 of 36) suggested including some variation of the Lafayette Regional Expressway – the “Loop” on alternative future scenario maps. In consolidating the alternative scenario ideas, the notion of improving I-49 emerged as a more frequent idea. In addition, the I-49 extension is illustrated on the parish’s Long Range Transportation Plan and preliminary engineering studies are underway. The Regional Expressway is conceptual at this point and undergoing environmental review. It may be a project that is recommended for continuing study as part of the development of the comprehensive plan, but is not directly tied to any of the alternative scenarios.

Many of the groups noted ideas for site specific projects that can be addressed as part of the comprehensive plan strategies and actions, they include:

- Create an accessible Riverwalk
- Address neighborhood roadway transportation cut-throughs
- Incorporated neighborhood traffic calming measures
- Consider light rail with airport connection
- Improve gateways in and out of the city of Lafayette
- Create a continuous bike path and greenway network
- Waterway and coulees as opportunities for green infrastructure and trails
- Opportunities for health, fitness, and recreation
- Link transit to schools
- Conserve and protect existing neighborhood (e.g., conservation districts)
- Plan for redevelopment / walkable senior living communities
- Family friendly development and services
- Increase use of underground utilities

Appendix A: Community Forum and Online Survey Questions

Part I: Overview / Demographics

1. Did you participate in the first series of Community Forums (in April)?
2. Where do you live?
3. How would describe your race / ethnicity?
4. What is your age?
5. How long have you lived in Lafayette?
6. What best describes your home?
7. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
8. Where is your job located?
9. How long is your commute to work?
10. How do you commute to work?
11. How would you describe the area where you live?

Part II: Alternative Futures

12. Where do you see yourself wanting to live in 10-15 years?
 - I'd like to be living in the same house I'm in now
 - Apartment / townhome in or near downtown
 - A smaller house near amenities like restaurants and shops
 - In a suburban neighborhood, that is mostly residential
 - A larger home with more space, in a rural area
13. Where do you think future employment should be concentrated?
 - Central Lafayette Parish (downtown or downtown adjacent)
 - Satellite Centers (smaller employment nodes which are located somewhat near to, but are mostly independent of the Parish's major employment core including downtown, Oil Center, ULL, etc.)
 - Scattered throughout the Parish
14. How important to you is living within walking distance of amenities such as shops, restaurants, and schools?
 - Very important
 - Somewhat important
 - Not important
 - Do not want
15. How important to you is access to public transit (e.g., bus, train)?
 - Very important
 - Somewhat important
 - Not important
 - Do not want
16. How important to you is preserving the Parish's natural features and open spaces?
 - Very important
 - Somewhat important
 - Not important
 - Do not want
17. What kind of parks and open spaces do you most enjoy?
 - Informal, natural setting with hiking trails, outdoor recreation amenities, active uses, access to water features
 - Formal, civic space with programmable event space, benches, hardscapes, integrated into a neighborhood, access to transit
 - Semi-formal community park and fields, a mix of active and passive uses, parking facilities, open spaces
18. In 2035, our vision statement says that mobility has been enhanced with improved road network efficiency and connectivity, expanded transit choices and bicycle and pedestrian streets. Today less

than 10% of the population carpools to work, less than 1.5% uses public transit, and less than 2.5% walks to work. How can we improve our mobility options and reduce commute times? (rank in priority) (online survey only)

- Maintain and improve existing roads through capacity improvements
 - Improve access by extending and connecting existing roads
 - Increase public transit access (e.g., development near transit, improve transit routes, more frequent stops)
 - Develop more bike lanes and bicycle amenities (e.g., share the road signage, bike parking)
 - Improve pedestrian connections (e.g., trails and sidewalks)
19. Describe any other ideas you may have for improving transportation efficiency and connectivity. (online survey only)
20. Today, there are about 91,300 housing units in the Parish. About 64% of those are single-family detached, 18% are multi-family (more than 2 units in a building), and only 2% are single-family attached (e.g., duplexes, townhomes). In general, traditional neighborhood patterns, which are characterized by a mix of housing types and uses within walking distance of one another, are absent in Lafayette Parish. The vision statement says that we will be a community of safe neighborhoods that provide expanded housing and lifestyle choices among diverse, urban, suburban, and rural settings. To achieve the vision, how should the mix of housing types change? (online survey only)
- Large Lot Single Family Residential (increase/decrease/no change)
 - Medium to Small Lot Single Family Residential (increase/decrease/no change)
 - Mixed Single Family / Attached Residential Neighborhoods (e.g., mix of single-family and townhomes) (increase/decrease/no change)
 - Multi-family Residential (e.g., condos, apartments) (increase/decrease/no change)
21. In 2035, our vision statement says we will have managed growth and development in a manner that conserves land and natural resources, is fiscally sound, and respectful of private property rights. Today, pressure from scattered residential development is encroaching into the parish's rural/agricultural areas. Land for agriculture and the number of farms are decreasing. The public cost of providing services to outlying subdivisions, from roads and basic infrastructure, to parks, libraries, and schools, to emergency response services increases with additional development of this kind. Which strategies do you think might be most effective in achieving the vision's goal of efficiently managing growth and development? (check as many as apply) (online survey only):
- Strengthen/revitalize the urban core (downtown Lafayette and adjacent neighborhoods)
 - Direct growth to other centers (e.g., smaller communities other than downtown, areas near city boundaries, arterial roads or intersections)
 - In rural areas, cluster residential growth to preserve farmland and open space as much as possible
 - No change, nothing wrong with the current development trend
 - Other